February 2024

Your DGB Cultural District E-News

Special Announcement

ArtWeek Berkshires May 17 - 27, 2024
ArtWeek Berkshires is an annual celebration of local creativity. Enjoy 100+ hands-on or behind-the-scenes events and open studios across the region, from gallery shows to live performances, poetry readings to painting demos and so much more. ArtWeek is presented by the five Cultural Districts Berkshire County and promoted by 1Berkshire.

ArtWeek Berkshires is open to any individual or organization interested in sharing their work in an interactive, experiential way. No professional experience is required. ArtWeek includes visual art as well as performances of music, spoken word, behind the scenes tours, workshops, demonstrations, artist talks, etc.

In the past, artists from the following southern Berkshire towns have participated: Becket, West Stockbridge, Lee, Stockbridge, Housatonic, Tyringham, Great Barrington, Otis, Monterey, Egremont, Sandisfield, Sheffield, New Marlborough, and Mount Washington.

Ready to sign up? Fill out the online registration form [HERE].

The deadline to register is May 8, 2024. To learn more about registration, participation, and FAQs click [here]. Still have questions? Contact your closest Cultural District: culturalgb@gmail.com

Portrait of a Great Barrington Artist: Barbara Watkins
Barbara Watkins is a longtime great Barrington resident and small business owner. Her store Evergreen Fine American Crafts, which has been in Great Barrington for 44 years, is set to close at the end of March when Barbara retires.

When Barbara Watkins opened Evergreen more than 44 years ago on Railroad Street she had borrowed $2000 from her parents, her husband Bob built and painted all of the displays, and her artist friends sold their work on consignment – a business model Barbara does not recommend. After several years on Railroad Street Barbara was looking for a bigger space and Evergreen Fine American Crafts ended up moving to Main Street where it has been for the last 34 years.

The main reason Barbara decided to retire this year is due to her lease ending. Initially, Barbara was trying to sell the business, and at one point there was a possibility one of her sons was going to take over, but nothing ever came to fruition. Although she is going to miss her customers, employees, and, artists Barbara is very happy with this decision. She is in good health and the business is doing well, two things Barbara does not take for granted.

When she retires Barbara intends to stay very busy reading lots of books, playing tennis, riding her bike on the bike path, visiting friends, and gardening – something that brings Barbara immense joy.

We spoke with Barbara about her life as a small business owner and her plans post-retirement.
What did you do before you opened Evergreen?
After college Barbara worked in different art galleries, and a silkscreen company in New Bedford. Upon meeting Bob, Barbara spent her time helping him paint floral designs on his pottery that was being sold at different galleries and craft shows throughout the region. After years of traveling to different craft shows and meeting many artist friends, Barbara decided to open her store.

What is the most rewarding aspect of being a business owner in downtown Great Barrington?
Barbara is going to miss her customers the most. Customer service has always been very important to her and for most of its existence, Barbara has been the face of Evergreen, working seven days a week answering phone calls, and greeting every customer who has walked through her doors. She's had returning customers throughout the years, many of whom have been customers since she first opened 44 years ago. She is also going to miss her artists - who like her customers Barbara has had relationships with for decades.

What is the most challenging part about being a small business owner?
Barbara only carries pieces she likes, so her biggest challenge has always been picking out things other people will want to buy. She doesn't have to want to own it for herself but she does have to like it to sell it.

What is your medium as an artist?
Barbara does not have a particular medium she favors over the other, instead, she is drawn to whatever inspires her at the moment. She likes to do everything from drawing, oil painting, and watercolors to quilting, sowing, and jewelry making. She uses a lot of her inspiration for her garden designs – a hobby in which she plans to do more upon retiring.

Advice for running a business like yours?
Barbara's advice is plain and simple, just treat people the way you want to be treated.

Creative Economy Jobs

Find Berkshire County in-person, remote, and hybrid jobs that pay a minimum of $40K a year in all fields, including arts, education, nonprofits, and related, at 1Berkshire's The Jobs Thing. Among some of the current openings of interest are:

Development Project Manager, Community Access to the Arts

You can also find exclusively creative economy jobs, including remote and hybrid opportunities, at MCC's HireCulture. Several sample postings are below.

• Manager of Fabrication, MASS MoCA
Arts Funding and Resources

Curated information about funding and financial assistance for those working in the creative economy.

Resources for Arts Organizations -February 2024

An overview of MCC's FY24 Programs and Funding Opportunities is available HERE. Check out programs including Grants for Creative Individuals and Operating Grants for Organizations.

Artist Opportunities for February and March

Upcoming opportunities include the Fire Island Residency. The first residency in the United States exclusively for artists identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, intersex, two-spirit or queer, annually accepts applications for its prestigious and internationally recognized summer program.

Check the NEFA website for a wide range of resources, including:

Recent Publications
Arts & Accessibility
Community Initiatives
Racial & Social Justice Resources

The ArtsHub site regularly updates with opportunities, events, news, and more.

See profiles and list yourself here and learn about promoting yourself on NEFA's related site: CreativeGround.

ArtsHub is an ever-evolving idea designed to highlight and bring together the amazing artists, organizations, and events that are
happening within the creative communities of Western Mass.

Mass Creative advocates for a well-resourced and equitable creative sector essential to the economic and civic vibrancy of Massachusetts.

MASSCreative's Action Network fights for policies that benefit cultural nonprofits, creative businesses and individual artists in Massachusetts. Where arts, culture and creativity are recognized as vital components of civically engaged, economically vibrant and equitable communities.

What | When | Where

What: London’s National Theatre in HD: Vanya
When: February 24, 7 pm
Where: The Mahaiwe
Details: Hopes, dreams, and regrets are thrust into sharp focus in this one-man adaptation which explores the complexities of human emotions. Andrew Scott brings multiple characters to life in Simon Stephens’ radical new version of Chekhov’s Uncle Vanya.

What: Ballet Hispanico
When: March 2, 3 pm
Where: The Mahaiwe
Details: For 50 years Ballet Hispanico has been bringing communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance performances, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences.

What: Met Opera Live in HD: Verdi’s La Forza Del Destino
When: March 9, 12 pm
Where: The Mahaiwe
Details: Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts Verdi’s La Forza del Destino, with stellar soprano Lise Davidsen, following a string of recent Met triumphs, in her role debut as the noble Leonora.

What: Close Encounters With Music: Celtic Baroque Band Makaris—A Bach Family
**Concert with an Irish Twist**
*What:* March 17, 4 pm  
*Where:* The Mahaiwe  
*Details:* In his dance suites, J. S. Bach ventures into Spanish sarabandes, French bourrées and British gigues. He and family members delighted in arranging Celtic and Scottish folk music. They will be joined by Beethoven and Haydn, who also forayed into Irish folk music with their own arrangements.

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**GBAM Winter Arts Market**
*What:* March 17, 10 am - 3 pm  
*Where:* Saint James Place  
*Details:* Call to all lovers of artisan-made, locally crafted goods! The Great Barrington Arts Market presents their Winter Arts Market from 10am – 3pm on the first floor of Saint James Place on the following dates. Entry is free of charge.

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**Sing & Swing**
*What:* March 23, 8 pm  
*Where:* The Mahaiwe  
*Details:* Each armed with prodigious trumpet talent and vocal charm, Bria Skonberg and Benny Benack III will re-live and re-imagine some of the classic partners in jazz and popular song, including Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland and Bing Crosby and Dean Martin and Peggy Lee.

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**Mass Office of Travel and Tourism**
The Massachusetts Official Travel and Tourism (MOTT) website includes a FREE business database where you can list your business! To get started, visit their website, where you can sign on as a new business or update your information if you are already registered.

Are you making the most of the #mylocalMA campaign? Submit Your Story for a chance to be featured on social media and in MOTT's My Local MA e-newsletter. You can find more information and resources at Lovemylocalma.com.